Benjamin Williams
his Book

Mr. *Wigglesworth's*

Election SERMON,

May 30th. 1733.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

An Essay for Reviving RELIGION.

A

SERMON

Delivered at *Boston*,

Before the

Great and General Assembly

Of the Province of the

Massachusetts-Bay,

May 30*th.* MDCCXXXIII.

Being the Anniversary for the ELECTION of His Majesty's COUNCIL for the Province.

By *Samuel Wigglesworth*, M.A.

Pastor of a Church in *Ipswich*.

Habakkuk iii. 2. ------- *O LORD* REVIVE *thy Work in the midst of the Years* ----- *in Wrath remember Mercy.*

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MDCCXXXIII.

In the House of Representatives May 31. 1733.

ORdered, That Mr. *Jonathan Fellows* and Mr. *John Choate* the Representatives of the Town of *Ipswich*, with Col. *Wainwright*, give the Thanks of the House to the Rev. Mr. *Samuel Wigglesworth* for his SERMON Preached yesterday before the General Court, and desire a Copy of the same for the Press.

J. Quincy, Speaker.

AN Election SERMON.

REV. III. 1, 2.

——Thou haſt a Name that thou liveſt, and art dead. Be watchful, and ſtrengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.——

THE Infinite goodneſs of GOD ſtill indulging us the poſſeſſion of our INVALUABLE CIVIL PRIVILEDGE, whereof the Buſineſs of this [illegible] will give a moſt ſenſible deſi[illegible] proof; and we having together therewith been favour'd for one Year more with a place in Chriſt's VINEYARD, witneſs our preſent liberty of Sacred things: It would be an unaccountable Stupidity in us, if we ſhould forget, either to rejoyce in, or bleſs God for our *Undeſerved Felicity*; or to enquire after the moſt probable means of prolonging it.

Theſe

These are the Motives which, we hope, have drawn together this *Vast Assembly*, of all ranks of Persons, and from the several parts of the Province: They come to testify their sincere regard to our *happy Constitution* on this it's great Anniversary, their ardent Desire of the *publick Prosperity*, and Consent to any wise Proposals for it's Advancement.

Under these Views they not only have their eyes on those *worthy Patriots* whom our KING and Country are pleas'd to betrust with all that is dear and valuable to us, as Men who have *Understanding of the Times, to know what Israel ought to do*; but apply themselves also to the *Messengers of the Lord of Hosts*, believing that their *Lips do keep a Knowledge*, which may be no less useful to secure the Interests of a People, than the *wisdom* of the *greatest State-Politician.*

And truly seeing a People's Happiness entirely depends on *God's Favour*, which alone *maketh their Mountain to stand strong*; and this *Favour* follows their care to Please and Serve Him: there is room for the *Ministers of Religion* (whose proper business it is to teach Men such things) to give *Counsel* on such *Occasions.*

That I might not altogether frustrate the Ex[illegible]on of those devout Persons, who are now [illegible]to *Enquire in God's Temple*; I have made choice of the Scriptural Passage which has now been read, containing the Description of a Church of Christ sunk into the most *woful Religious Decays*: Which Description if it shall serve as a Glass to us, representing our own case in any measure to our view, and convincing us of our own *Apostacies and Corruptions*; happy preparation will thereby be made for our complying also with the wise Counsel which accompanies it in our Text.

The

The first thing that appears in this Book of the Revelation is the Seven Epistles to Seven principal Churches of *Asia*, of which we have an account in the three first Chapters: Concerning which there hath been no small dispute between very Learned Divines, some affirming them to be a *Vision* of the *State* of the *Universal Church* of all Ages divided into *Seven Periods*: Others rather taking them for *Representations* of what had happened in those *Seven Churches*; and that the Prophetical part of the Book doth not begin until we come to the fourth Chapter, where this *Great and Divine Theatre* is opened with the greatest majesty and solemnity.

But I am not concerned, whether it be the true Church of *Sardis* her *Character* that is here drawn; or a *Representation* of some *particular Period* of the *Church Universal*. This *True*, or *Mystical Sardis*, which you will, had lost much of her *spiritual Lustre*: *The Crown was fallen from her Head*, as our Text, and the whole Epistle wherein 'tis found, do sufficiently assure us.

It will be easily granted, I suppose, that tho' this Epistle, as well as the others, is directed to the *Angel* of the *Church in Sardis*; yet this *Angel* is rather to be considered here *Representively* than *Personally*: and that both *Pastor* and *Church* have an interest in the Contents of it. Why else was *John* commanded in the 11*th*. ver. of the first Chapter, *Write what thou seest in a Book, and send it to the seven Churches that are in Asia?* But let us at length hear and consider what it is that the *Spirit* doth in our Text speak to the *Church* of *Sardis*.

Thou hast a Name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.

Herein

Herein we have

I. *The Portraiture, or Repreſentation of a Decayed Church.* A *Golden Candleſtick, whoſe Gold was become dim.* Her *Religion* being chiefly in *Form*, and dying every day. ----*Thou haſt a name that thou liveſt, and art dead.* They are not here charged with any notorious *Corruptions* in *Doctrine*, or *ſcandalous Immoralities:* But their *Accuſation* is, that they were in a great meaſure ſtrangers to the *Power* and *Life* of Religion.

II. *A moving Exhortation*, grounded upon this diſcovery, *to the decayed Church, to endeavour a Revival of Dying Religion ----- Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.*

III. *A moſt wiſe and happy Method propoſed, wherein to attempt the Revival of Religion, and reſtoring it to its proper vigour*, viz. *Vigilancy. Be Watchful. Inadvertency, Sloth* and *Security*, 'tis probable, had no ſmall hand in bringing on the *Diſeaſe*; *Watchfulneſs* therefore muſt be the *Remedy.*

I. Let us examine the *Melancholy Account* that is here given of *Sardis.* Thou haſt a *Name* that thou *Liveſt*, and art *Dead.* And again, ---- the things which remain, that are *ready to die.*

[redacted]gurative Style, expreſſing things *ſpiritual* and *ſ*[redacted] in terms borrowed from things *common* and *natural*, is very uſual in Scripture; and in particular, the *reality* and *vigour* of Godlineſs is therein ſo frequently expreſs'd by *Life*, and the contrary by *Death*, that the Similitude grows familiar. The *Life* and *Death of Religion*, it's decaying or flouriſhing ſtate, are therefore the things which the terms of our Text muſt guide our thoughts to. I ſhall take this for my firſt Doctrine,

DOCT.

DOCT. I. *That a Church of Chriſt may have a Name that they Live and flouriſh in Religion, and yet all the while be Dead, or Decaying.*

A People may have a *Name* for Religion, *i. e.* in the *eſtimation of Mankind*: The World may look upon them, and admire them as a People diſtinguiſh'd by their *Faith*, *Piety*, *Charity*, *Juſtice*, *Temperance*, and *Sobriety*. And, a People alſo may have *High and Glorious Pretentions* to it, and make their *Boaſtings* of it; *Phariſaically* ſetting up themſelves above all others in *Purity* of *Doctrine* and *Worſhip*, and *Strictneſs* of *Diſcipline*, and *Morals*, even to the *condemning* and *unchurching* all that differ in the leaſt from their *Model*: who in the pride and vanity of their Hearts ſay, *The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are theſe*, Jer. 7. 4. *Sardis* might poſſibly partake of the ſame vanity with *Laodicea*. *I am Rich and increaſed in Goods*, Rev. 3. 17.

Or this *Name* that ſhe *lived*, may imply, that the *Religion* of this decayed *Church* was *chiefly external*, and conſiſted in an *outward pompous Shew*, void of the *Eſſence and Life*. She was ſplendidly adorned without; yet was not like the true Spouſe of Chriſt, *All glorious within*, Pſal. 45. 13. Her *Chriſtianity* was in a great meaſure a *lifeleſs Picture*, and *vain Flouriſh*. *Having a Form of Godlineſs, but denying the Power thereof*, ſays the Apoſtle *Paul*, 2 Tim. 3. 5. There have been ſuch Churches, as well as Perſons; and it is probable eno' that this is the principal ſenſe of the phraſe; becauſe it follows, and art *dead*. All the *Name* and *Appearance* was but a *cover* of *Hypocriſy*.

Thou haſt a Name that thou liveſt, and art dead. This *unhappy Character* belongs to a *People*,

1. When the moſt *ſolid, weighty, and important Branches of Religion are not found in them.* When their Obedience, how great ſoever in *Shew and Name*, is ſo far from *Univerſality*, that it is *confined* to a *few*, and thoſe the *more ceremonial Circumſtantial* things. As if a People ſhould much inſiſt upon any Rules of *Decency and Order* in the *Worſhip* of *God*, and violently puſh for an Uniformity therein; and yet at the ſame time be very ſlack in attending upon the *Divine Worſhip*: As if they ſhould boaſt of the *Orthodoxy* of their *Faith*, that they believe all *God's Precepts concerning all things to be right*; and yet ſhould take no care to *cleanſe their way in obedience to them*: *Say that they know God, and yet in Works deny him.* That People, whoſe Religion is ſo *lame* and *wanting* in the *principal Parts*, is not *real.* Indeed the abſence of any one *Eſſential* part deſtroys the *whole.* Jam. 2. 10. *For whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law of God, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* So that if any People ſhould pay regard to ſome of the *great things* of *God's Law*, and yet deſpiſe and reject others; if they ſhould be ſo abſurd, as to *ſerve God*, and yet *forget their Neighbour*; if they ſhould do acts of *Charity*, and yet unaccountably neglect thoſe of *Juſtice*; if they ſhould flee *Uncleanneſs*, and yet wallow in *Drunkenneſs*, would not ſuch a People's *Religion be vain?*

2. The ſame may be affirmed of that People in whom there are not found thoſe *Spiritual Graces which ſhould be their Internal Ornaments, and the Principles of thoſe Good Works which they make a ſhew of.* There may be in a Church a *profeſſion* of Chriſt, and yet no ſound and hearty *Faith* in Him: *Reformation* of Manners, without any ſincere *Repentance*; *Obedience* to God's Law, without any *Love* to Him; and *Alms* to the Poor, void of *Charity*: And in ſuch a caſe theſe Works are *dead Works*, and ſuch a Church a *dead* one, *i. e.* deſtitute of the *vital* part of *Godlineſs.*

This

This hath been the ſad caſe of many Churches, of the *Jewiſh* to be ſure. In the time of the propheſying of *Iſaiah* we find that there was no *ſincere Devotion* in their *Worſhip*. Chap. 29. ver. 13. *This People draw near me with their Mouth, and with their Lips do honour me; but have removed their Heart far from me.* And in the days of the Prophet *Jeremiah*, their *Repentance* was as *Hypocritical*; as in the 10*th* ver. of the 3*d*. Chap. of his Prophecy. *And yet for all this her treacherous ſiſter Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole Heart, but feignedly, ſaith the Lord.* And in the days of our Saviour's abode amongſt them we find that their greateſt pretenders to Sanctity, were utter ſtrangers to *purity of Heart*. *Wo unto you Scribes and Phariſees Hypocrites, for ye make clean the outſide of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and exceſs*, Matth. 23. 25. And again, ver. 27.——— *Ye are like to whited Sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanneſs*

'Tis paſt all doubt, that this was in a great meaſure the caſe of *Sardis*. *Thou haſt a Name that thou liveſt, and art dead.* q. d. Thou haſt Works which are *materially* good and laudable; but they ſpringing from no *divine Principles* are unacceptable to me. In our Context there follow theſe words, *For I have not found thy Works perfect before God.* One *perfection* of Good Works is their *Univerſality*, another is their *Sincerity*; and that ſeems to be what *Sardis* wanted. I have not found thy Works *perfect before God*; who beholds the *Heart* as well as *Works*, and takes notice that thou art void of that *Grace* wherewith thou mighteſt ſerve Him *acceptably* with *Reverence*, and *godly Fear*.

3. A Church that hath a *godly outward Appearance* of Religion, may yet be *Dead*, or at leaſt *ready*

to Die; i. e. *Void of all ſpiritual Vigour*, if not entirely deſtitute of the vital part of Chriſtianity; yet this remainder of Life ſo *Feeble* as to be utterly unable to exert it ſelf in making progreſs, or bringing forth any valuable fruit.

The Members of a Church may generally *Depart from Evil and do Good*, and *Walk in God's Precepts and Ordinances blameleſs*; and yet be in a great meaſure *ſtrangers to the paſſions and pleaſures of the ſpiritual Life*; and their Duties and Devotions be performed with ſo *faint and indifferent a Temper* as to forfeit all the commendation they would otherwiſe lay claim to. Hearken to the temper of *Laodicea*, Rev. 3. 15,16. *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then becauſe thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will ſpue thee out of my mouth.* It is very probable that the Church of *Sardis* was *ſick* of the *Laodicean diſeaſe*. *And art dead.* q. d. A lifeleſs motionleſs temper hath ſeiz'd upon thee: Thou art in a great meaſure dead as to the reality of Godlineſs; but entirely ſo as to the operation and activity of it: If thy Grace is not *dead*, 'tis *dormant* at leaſt, oppreſſed and overborn by *powerful Luſts*, or *choaked* by the *Love of the World*. *Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die*, ſaith our Text. And when can *Religion* be more truly ſaid to be *ready to dye*, than when the *Zeal*, *Care*, and *Activity* of it's *Profeſſors are gone*, their *Love grown Cold*, their *Spirits ſunk*, and they become *Indifferent* whether they ſerve God or not? And again, who can more properly be exhorted to *ſtrengthen the Things --- that are ready to dye*, than ſuch? *They muſt ſtir up the Gift of God that is in them*; get a *New ſpring* to their *Affections*; labour to reaſon themſelves into a *greater Concern* for *Religion*, and pray for *quickning enlivening influences from above*. And this brings me

II.

II. *To Christ's Exhortation to the Degenerate Church. Strengthen the Things which remain, that are ready to dye.*

Whereas we are here told of the things which *remained* in *Sardis*; it may be infer'd herefrom, that she was in a *Decayed state*, and only some *Poor Remains* of *Primitive Excellency and Beauty* were now to be found in her. And whereas these *Remains* are said to be *ready* to dye; we are taught to interpret her being *Dead*, rather to imply a *Languishing Consuming Spiritual estate.*

Churches under a fearful degree of *Apostacy* may notwithstanding have some good and valuable *Remainders* of what they once possessed. *e. g.* The *Decay'd Body* may still have in it some *Living Active Members*, some *sincerely Zealous and Pious Persons*, who are not infected with the common Contagion; who in despight of all Temptations and evil Examples, *Hold fast their Righteousness*, maintaining a life of *Devotion towards God*, and *Justice and Charity towards Man*, *shining thereby as lights in the World, in the midst of a crooked & perverse Nation.* Such were *Noah* in the *Old World*, *Lot* in *Sodom*, and those *Seven Thousand* in *Israel*, mentioned in 1 Kin. 19.18. *who had not bow'd the Knee to Baal. Thou hast a few names in Sardis, which have not defiled their Garments*: as in the context.

Or the Degenerate Church more *Collectively considered* may retain *some good things.* She may *Hold fast the form of sound Words*, and an *outward Form of Godliness.* They may abstain from *gross Immoralities*, *Pray*, *Worship*, and *Hear the Word of God, and do many other good things*; as hath been said above. All this is consistent enough with a *Languishing Dying Religion.* And our

II. DOCT

II. DOCT. Shall be, That in ſuch a Caſe as is above deſcribed, i.e. *When a People's Religion is ſo far dead & gone into decay, that ſome ſmall Remainders only of it are to be found,* it *highly concerns them to endeavour a Revival of it to former Life and Power.* They muſt do their utmoſt to *ſtrengthen* and *encourage* the few *Pious Perſons* whom they have left among them, *Honouring* and *Regarding* them as their *Defence* and *Glory*, *Hearkning* to their *Wiſdom*, and *Imitating* their bright *Examples.*

They muſt *Hold faſt what they have*, viz. all their *Good & Virtuous Practices*, and be adding daily to them; contenting themſelves with nothing ſhort of an *Univerſal Compliance* with the *Divine Will*, and a being *Adorned* with *whatſoever* is *Good*, *Virtuous* and *Lovely.*

They muſt *cry after Saving Grace*, and *lift up their Voice* for thoſe *Divinely wrought Principles*, which are the very *Soul of Religion*, rendring all it's *Duties* acceptable to the *Living God.*

By *Conſtant Practice* they muſt labour to make *Virtue* and *Holineſs* become *Habitual*, *Eaſy* and *Pleaſant*: and at the ſame time *Impreſs* their minds with ſuch a ſenſe of their *Excellency* and *Importance* above all other things, as may reaſonably engage them to purſue them with all their *Soul*, *with all their Mind*, and *with all their Strength.*

As Reaſons of this Doctrine, let two only of many be briefly conſidered, *viz.*

1. *Religion is the great* DUTY & BUSINESS *of Man.* Every Man that is born into the World, and every People and Nation under Heaven, are under indiſpenſible Obligations to *Know and Serve God*, mak-

ing

ing his Glory their End, his Law their Rule, and Work their Employment. Eſpecially whereſoever the Light of Revelation ſhines, it lays additional Obligations upon it's happy enjoyers, *To deny Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, and to Live Soberly, Righteouſly and Godly.* How dangerous and wicked is it for any People to rebel againſt this Light? Nor will an *External Shew & Name* be found ſufficient: For God *Deſireth Truth in the Inward Part*, and requireth that his Service and Intereſt be regarded as the *Principal Thing.* Matth. 22. 37. *Thou ſhalt Love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, & with all thy Soul, & with all thy Mind.*

And as it follows from hence, that a People muſt be *Religious*, and make it their *Buſineſs* to be ſo; ſo alſo if they find themſelves *gone backward* in it from what they once were, they muſt *Repent of their Backſliding*, and ſtrive to be once more a *peculiar People, Zealous of good Works.*

2. Another Powerful Argument preſents it's ſelf, and that is INTEREST. A People's GLORY and HAPPINESS lean upon their *Religion*, and fall to the Ground upon it's *Removal.*

Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation; it brings them to Honour when they do embrace it. God himſelf will do them *Honour* by vouchſafeing them his *Preſence*, his *Eſtimation*, and the *Diſtinguiſhing favours of his Providence.* So long as *Iſrael* were *Holineſs* to the *Lord*, retaining the *Subſtance* and *Vigour* of *Religion*, what words but thoſe of the Holy Ghoſt are ſufficient to expreſs the *Dignity* and *Beatitude* they were advanced to? *Happy art thou, O Iſrael: who is like unto thee, O People, ſaved by the Lord! For what Nation is there ſo Great, who hath God ſo nigh unto them?* and again, *to make high above all Nations which he*

he hath made, in Praiſe, and in Name, and in Honour. Deut. 33. 29. 4. 7. and 26. 19. And again, Iſai. 62. 3. *Thou ſhalt alſo be a crown of Glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal Diadem in the hand of thy God.*

Religion is a People's beſt *Protection* from their *Enemies.* The *Righteous Nation* ſhall enter the *Strong City, which hath Salvation for Walls and Bulwarks.* The ſame commands the *precious Things* that are put forth by the *Sun* and by the *Moon*; opens the *Granaries* of *Heaven*, and *Feeds a People with the fineſt of the Wheat.*

It is their *Security* reſpecting all their *Civil* and *Eccleſiaſtical Priviledges.* Nay it is their *Life*: i. e. Their very *Being* as a *People* depends on their *Fidelity* to God, and *ſteadineſs* in *keeping his Covenant*: and if they finally revolt they muſt expect to be rooted out, and come to nothing. Deut. 32. 47. *For it is your Life, and by this thing ye ſhall prolong your days in the Land whither ye go over Jordan to poſſeſs it.*

And more than this, The *Spiritual Clouds* will be *commanded to pour down their plentiful Influences* upon the People that are *filled with all the fruits of Righteouſneſs.* Chriſt's *Vineyard* ſhall be continued to ſuch *Husbandmen*: *For to him that hath ſhall be given.*

But on the contrary, all thoſe *Bleſſings* will preſently vaniſh, and all manner of *Reproaches* and *Curſes* come upon and overtake them, if they *forſake the Lord*, and *his Fear* ceaſeth to be in them. Their *Glory ſhall depart*; God will *caſt them off*, and *abhor them*; *Remove the Hedge of his Providence*, and *take away his Kingdom from them*; whilſt their Enemies

Enemies who were won't to look upon their *Elevation* with *Envy*, ſhall behold their *ignominious Downfall* with *Scorn and Triumph.*

If there needed any Demonſtration that the *Proſperity* of Nations followeth and is governed by the *Riſe* and *Declination* of their *Religion*, I could eaſily give ſatisfaction from the Hiſtorical Part of the Scripture. The *Old World*, *Sodom* with her *Siſter Cities*, and the *Canaanites* were arrived at a monſtrous degree of Impiety, and proportionably terrible was their *Viſitation.* They were ſwept away, conſumed, and ſpued out of their Dwellings. *Niniveh*'s *Fate* was proclaimed, but upon her Humiliation and Reformation (tho' 'tis probable but external) the Execution was delayed. Such a regard had the Governour of the World to the face and appearance of *Religion.* So long as the *Jewiſh Nation* kept the Law of God, and held themſelves undefiled with the abominations of their Borderers, how tender was God of them, and how bountiful to them! *What could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it?* Iſa. 5. 4. *But when they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit, then their Friend and Saviour turn'd to be their Enemy, and fought againſt them*, Iſai. 63. 10.

All which may fully convince us, that as it is the *Intereſt* of a People to lay *Religion* in their *Foundation*, and to build their *Happineſs* upon it; ſo when they perceive this their *Foundation* in any meaſure *ſhaken*, and their *Glory* and *Felicity* conſequently like to become *Ruinous* thereby; they muſt labour with all their might to *Re-eſtabliſh* it, that ſo neither *it* or *they* may ever be *moved!* Jer. 6. 8. *Be thou inſtructed, O Jeruſalem, leaſt my Soul depart from thee; leſt I make thee deſolate, a land not inhabited.* Rev. 2. 5. —— *Repent and do the firſt work, or elſe I will*

come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candleſtick out of its place, except thou repent.

Imagining that this is eno' to convince a *Degenerate People* of their *Duty* and *Intereſt* to labour in *reſtoring the Power* of *Godlineſs*, I ſhall proceed in the third place,

III. To lay our Saviour's *Wiſe Counſel* before them by way of *Direction.*

BE WATCHFUL,—and from whence we raiſe a

DOCT. III. Viz. *That Watchfulneſs is the moſt hopeful Method which can be taken by a People for reviving their Dying Religion, and Recovering it to it's former vigorous flouriſhing Eſtate.*

The *Nature* of Spiritual *Watchfulneſs*, together with it's *happy Influence* upon *Religion* will appear, when I have mentioned a few things in which it may be uſefully exerciſed and improved.

And here,

1. A People cannot exerciſe their *Watchful eye* better, than by *enquiring into the ſtate of Religion amongſt them.* To ſee whether it be the good way which they go in, or not; and if ſo in the main, yet what leſſer wandrings they are guilty of? What Iniquities remain unpurged? And what Defects in point of Zeal, Activity and Caution are viſible in them? That ſo they may rectify what is amiſs, raiſe up that which is too low, perfect their ſtate, and better anſwer the Divine Expectations. *Let us ſearch and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord*, Lam. 3. 40.

And if a People would fully know their own Declenſions, they muſt ſometimes *Turn their Eye Backwards,*

Backwards, and call to mind what their Religious ſtate hath been; That in *comparing* it with their *preſent ſtate*, they may the better judge of the *Reality* and *Meaſure* of their *Decays*, and ſo apply a ſeaſonable and ſufficient *Remedy*. Such a *Reveiw* will be moſt *Awakening* and *Affecting*, and thruſt them upon Reforming in good earneſt. *Remember whence thou art fal'n, and Repent, and do the firſt works.*

2. From a diſcovery of their Backſlidings, a People muſt paſs on to a *ſuitable Apprehenſion of the dangers ariſing therefrom*, viz *Their being led on to greater Defections, until they become guilty of compleat Apoſtacy: and ruining Judgments at length fall upon them.* There is no greater means of hardning the *Hearts of the Sons of Men, and making them fully ſet in them to do evil*, than the folly of conſidering the Judgments of God, at a diſtance, or chaſing them entirely from their minds; and the People in whom this Vanity prevails, are far from Repentance. But the *Watchful* People *Foreſeeth the evil*; are ſenſible that *Vice grows apace*, and that one corruption makes room for another, and that as faſt as their Wickedneſs encreaſeth, ſo faſt *Divine Vengeance Approacheth*, which if they *will prevent, they muſt be ſpeedy in Reforming.*

3. No leſs neceſſary is it in order to give an happy Turn to the Languiſhing ſtate of Religion among a People, *That they keep a jealous eye upon all thoſe things which by experience they have found, or by right reaſon can argue to be Prejudicial to it's Intereſts.* It is moſt certain that there are ſome things which *wage open War* with Religion, opening a Door to a deluge of Impiety in a Land: whilſt there are others which *Give it a more ſecret, tho' not leſs mortal wound*; prey upon it's very Vitals, and bring it to

a *ſure*, tho' more *Lingring Death*. Both of theſe muſt be carefully and reſolutely guarded againſt.

Pride, *Scornfulneſs* and *Ungovernableneſs* in *Youth*, with a *Criminal Remiſsneſs* and *fond Indulgence* in thoſe who ſhould be their Governours, whereby the *Bridle* is taken off from the *Riſing Generation*, and they left to run into all Licenciouſneſs and Extravagancies: How ſure and fatal a Blow this gives to virtue, and how ſoon it will turn a Land of Holineſs into a *Sodom* of Wickedneſs, I need not ſay. The Guides of Youth cannot be too jealous of this, nor too diligent to prevent it.

Voluptuouſneſs carnally diſpoſes mens Minds, begetting an inſatiable Thirſt after farther Fruitions of that kind; and at the ſame time greatly *Indiſpoſes* them to things *Spiritual and Divine*: And He that is a *warm lover of ſenſual Pleaſures*, can be but a very *cool lover of God*.

A Paſſionate Love of the World alſo powerfully carries away a People's Heart from God, for we cannot *ſerve Him and Mammon*. If therefore their *Riches increaſe they muſt not ſet their Hearts upon them*. They muſt ſet bounds to their Deſires, and their Pleaſures. Let them looſe the reins as much as they pleaſe to the *Love of God*, and *Deſire of Heaven*, but not to *Things here below*.

4. *There are Perſons as well as Things who are no Friends to Godlineſs; and therefore that People who would either preſerve it in a flouriſhing ſtate, or raiſe it to ſuch a ſtate when fal'n and decay'd*, muſt *look well to them*. *One Sinner*, ſays the wiſe man, *deſtroyeth much good*, Eccl. 9. 18. Perſons of a vain and carnal Converſation, without any ſavour of Goodneſs, and Perſons of a looſe ungirt conduct, who aſſume to them-

themſelves too great Liberties, and whoſe Names notwithſtanding remain unblemiſh'd, and their Lives free from Scandal, are very dangerous to be convers'd with, by all that would be truly vertuous, leſt they *get a ſnare to their Soul* the more eaſily where there is an appearance of innocency & ſafety.

As to Perſons of more *Lewd and Debauch'd Manners*, e. g. The *Fornicator*, *Drunkard*, *Contentious*, *Sabbath Breaker*, *the Blaſphemer*, *Reviler*; and theſe are Workers of Iniquity whoſe ways are very Broad, multitudes accompany and imitate them; and it is not eno' for all Perſons to be upon their guard, and to pre-admoniſh one another of the danger there is in having to do with them; But ſome *Builders* of the *Kingdom* of *Darkneſs* muſt be *ſought out*, and brought to *deſerved Shame* and *Puniſhment*, that other incautious Perſons may be deter'd from doing like *folly in Iſrael.*

On the contrary,

5. It will not a little contribute to make Religion revive and flouriſh among a People, *If they will have their eye upon all the true Lovers and Promoters of it, to encourage them.*

The bright *Patterns of Virtue* who make their *Light ſhine before men*, live up to their holy Profeſſion, and powerfully recommend Religion to others by their beautiful engaging Examples, cannot be enough commended and honoured. A diſcerning People will eſteem ſuch Righteous Men their *Defence* and *Glory*, and a wiſe and prudent one will betruſt and employ them only.

And how much more worthy to be *accepted of the Multitude of their Brethren* are thoſe pious and zealous Perſons, who are indefatigable in building up the

the Kingdom of God, *Teaching Tranſgreſſors His ways*, and *turning many unto Righteouſneſs!* Eſpecially too, if they ſuſtain a Publick Character, *Labouring in the Word and Doctrine*: All the Friends of Religion muſt needs think them *worthy of Double Honour*, as well as a *Liberal Maintenance*: And that People who for want of ſufficient care for their Support, do throw Diſcouragements and Temptations before them, may find at length, that whilſt by their Parſimony, they have thought to ſave their worldly Goods, they have given a *Wound to Religion*, and betray'd their more valuable Intereſts.

6. Equally conducive to the reſtoring this Work of God among a People is it that, *They give diligent attendance on, and make Conſcientious Improvement of all the means of Grace.*

Bleſſed is the Man that heareth me, watching daily at my Gates, and waiting at the Poſts of my doors. Prov. 8. 34. And as bleſſed the People which doth ſo. *They ſhall be like a Tree planted by the rivers of Water, that bringeth forth his fruit in due ſeaſon.*

Inaſmuch as the *Sanctification of the Sabbath* is in it ſelf ſo material an Article of Religion, and the *Power and Life* of the whole do hang ſo much upon it, by reaſon of it's wonderful tendency to call off Mens minds from vanity, ſpiritualize their thoughts, and put them in mind of thoſe principal things which are too often forgotten; it demands conſequently a People's beſt care to prepare for it, and attend upon it; diſmiſſing all thoughts concerning Secular affairs, & devoting themſelves to communion with God in all religious Exerciſes; eſpecially the publick Devotions of his Houſe: All which alſo (the Word eſpecially) muſt be entertain'd, and not after a *Cuſtomary inadvertent* manner, *Receiving the ſeed by the way ſide*, but

but with *Attention*, *Understanding*, *Affection*, *Examination*, and *Application*. They who would think it worth while thus to enjoy the external means of Grace, should soon perceive surprizing Changes for the better: They should *Hear that Voice of the Son of God which inspires the Dead with Life*. Religion would in such a case presently *Renew it's Youth*, and prevail against all Opposition and Temptations. Psal. 92. 13, 14. *Those that be planted in the House of the Lord, shall flourish in the Courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.*

Nor ought a People only to give diligence in waiting upon the *stated Means*; but they are to watch the more *occasional Methods* which Providence makes use of to advance Christ's Kingdom, and to make his People *partakers of his Holiness*. They must have their eye upon all God's Benefits, to improve them as motives to *Faith*, *Thanksgiving* and *Obedience*. And if they be a People of *Wisdom*, they will *Hear the Voice* of his *Rod*, enquiring what are the meritorious provoking Causes of their Heavenly Father's Correction, and what is his will and pleasure signified by them; whereby they are also taught that it is an *Evil thing*, *and a Bitter to forsake the Lord*, *and suffer his service to go to decay*: and this becomes the happy introduction of Reformation.

I add only

7. That a People must by no means omit *Watching in their Prayers to God: That he would put forth Almighty Power to Revive their Expiring Religion, and make it Live and Flourish anew.* That he would *Put his Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts*, making them once again to cleave to himself as their God, and never to return to folly.

Such

Such Prayers as theſe when they be fervent and importunate, when they *Watch thereunto with all perſeverance and ſupplication*; and much more when they be the united voice of a People, ſetting Days apart for that purpoſe, will doubtleſs be prevalent with that God, with whom is the *Reſidue of the Spirit*: He will thereupon *Heal their Backſlidings, and take away their Iniquities.*

Indeed God's method in bringing on *Reformations*, is ordinarily in a great meaſure by pouring out a general Spirit of Supplication upon the revolted People. Prayer naturally leads to confeſſion of Sin, and this to godly Sorrow, Repentance, and Faith in Jeſus Chriſt. Zech. 12. 10. *And I will pour upon the Houſe of David, and the Inhabitants of Jeruſalem, the Spirit of Grace and of Supplications: And they ſhall look upon me, whom they have pierced, and they ſhall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only Son, and ſhall be in bitterneſs for him, as one that is in bitterneſs for his firſt born.*

The neglect of *Prayer* as it undeniably argues Religion to be already on the declining hand; ſo it will unavoidably cauſe it to die more and more: whilſt on the contrary, a freſh application to this duty, engageth God's preſence and aſſiſtance; who never fails to *give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him.*

This is the *Doctrinal Part*: In the *Application* of which, I ſhall *firſt* Enquire, How far the foregoing Deſcription of the Church of *Sardis* may be judged to belong to the Churches in this Land? And then *ſecondly*, I ſhall endeavour to apply the *Advice*, as well as the *Character.*

And

1. In

1. In many things that have been ſpoken in way of Deſcription of the fall'n decay'd ſtate of the Church of *Sardis*, may not the People of this Land behold their own *Character* more plainly than could be wiſhed?

If the judgment of thoſe *Divines* be good, who think the *Seven Epiſtles* to the *Aſiatick Churches* to have been *Viſionary Repreſentations* of ſo many future *Periods* of the *Univerſal Church*; 'tis queſtionable whither the *Sardian Period* could be fixed to any *Age* more juſtly than the preſent: Chriſtianity now ſubſiſting rather in *Name* than *Subſtance* in moſt places where it is profeſs'd: And that *Departure* from the *Romiſh Abominations* which has hitherto worn the glorious Name of the REFORMATION, muſt either have another *Title* put upon it, or elſe admit of a *Limitation*: The greater part of it's embracers contenting themſelves to *hold the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs*, and living as if their *Morals* were not concerned in it. How happy were it, if the *Churches* of this Land did not bear ſo viſible a part in this *Defect*!

What will it avail us that we *have*, or rather once *had*, a great Name for Religion; and have been commonly ſpoken of as a People amongſt whom *Sobriety*, *Righteouſneſs* and *Godlineſs*, have flouriſhed above many others, if thoſe *dignifying Excellencies* have now taken wing? If upon Enquiry it be found that our *Preſent Character* falls ſhort of our *Ancient one*, and that we have degenerated from the *Virtue* of our *Anceſtors*; we have greater cauſe of ſhame than of glorying in what we have been.

Our *High Pretentions* alſo to be a *Peculiar People*, and to carry the *Reformation* to a greater Height than many others, will not cover, but expoſe our

ſhame, if we are not indeed and in truth what we call our ſelves.

It is a Truth, that we have a *goodly exterior Form of Religion*; Our *Doctrine*, *Worſhip* and *Sacraments* are *Orthodox*, *Scriptural* and *Divine*. There is an external Honour paid to the *Sabbath*; and a profeſſed Veneration for Chriſt's *Ambaſſadors* for the ſake of their Lord. We ſet up and maintain the *Publick Worſhip* of God, and the Voice of the Multitude ſaying, *Let us go into the Houſe of the Lord*, is yet heard in our Land.

Moreover *Practical Religion* is not quite extirpated among us, and there are, it is to be hoped, a conſiderable number of ſerious and vigorous Chriſtians in our Churches, whoſe *Piety* is acknowledged and reſpected by their Neighbours, whilſt Living; and their *Memories* preſerved for it when deceaſed. Whilſt on the other hand, the *prophane and wicked Perſon* is generally abhor'd; and the more deformed Vices ſeek the retreats of Darkneſs to hide their deteſtable heads.

And yet with what ſorrow muſt we ſpeak, that theſe things are but the *Remains* of what we *Once* might ſhow; the ſhadow of paſt and vaniſh'd Glory! But if this be more difficultly proved, becauſe the *Piety* of the *paſt Generations* cannot now be brought upon the ſtage by way of compariſon with that of the *preſent*; yet it may but too eaſily be made evident, that the *Religion* of the *preſent Day* is more in *Name* than in *Life* and *Power*: But an *Image* of what it ought to be.

If the *Fear of the Lord* be to *Hate Evil*, as *Prov.* 8. 13. Then it is to be feared that our *Religion runs low*, and but little of this Fear is in us: Inaſmuch

as

as we find our ſelves ſtained with ſo many moſt odious Vices, eſpecially *Uncleanneſs*, *Drunkenneſs*, *Theft*, *Covetouſneſs*, *Violence*, *Malice*, *Strife*, and others: Which tho', as 'twas ſaid before, they be look'd upon with diſhonour, yet multitudes are found who are not aſhamed to commit them; and where ſuch *Iniquities abound*, may we not infer that *the Love of many waxeth cold*?

Again, How *Weak* is *the Teſtimony that is born by our Good Men againſt thoſe Tranſgreſſions!* Ought not holy Ones when they *Behold the Tranſgreſſor, to be grieved!* Will they not hate the things which God hates, and expreſs a ſuitable indignation at the preſumption of the Wicked, and the affronts which they put upon the Majeſty of Heaven? *Reproving*, and bringing them to *Puniſhment*? If therefore our *Profeſſors of Religion* think *Open Prophaneneſs* unworthy of their Wrath: If our *Miniſters of Religion* are ſparing to bear their publick Teſtimony againſt it; and when alſo the *Miniſters of Juſtice* are too Complaiſant to the Sons of Wickedneſs, to Execute the wholeſome Laws of the Province upon them; unto how low an ebb is our Goodneſs come!

To proceed, *If this be the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments, and none of them is grievous*; we may well be jealous of our ſelves that we are *Defective in the Eſſentials of Chriſtianity*. How hardly and ſlowly do we *Learn to do well!* May not God ſay concerning us, as He did concerning *Ephraim*? Hoſ. 8. 12. *I have written to him the great Things of my Law, but they were counted as a ſtrange thing*? We have indeed, as we reaſonably ſuppoſe, a great Number, who make Conſcience of *Worſhipping* and *Honouring God*, *Walking in his Precepts and Ordinances*, *Doing Juſtice and Mercy towards their Neighbour*, *Walking Circumſpectly*,

ſpectly, and *Watching* over the Souls of their Neighbour: But how *ſtrange things* are thoſe to the greateſt part of our Numbers! And our neglecting to do the *firſt Works* is conviction enough that we have left our *firſt Love*. *Barrenneſs* is a ſymptom of *Decay* at leaſt.

Nor is it leſs evident that many of us who have given our *Conſent to Religion*; are for *Curtailing* and *Abridging* it as much as we can: contenting our ſelves with the *loweſt degrees* of it, and carefully avoiding all it's moſt *Arduous*, *Mortifying Duties*, ſuch as *Mortification* of our *Beloved Luſts*, *Self-Denial*, *Weaning our ſelves from the World*, *Beſtowing our Riches on Works of Piety*, and *Overcoming Evil with Good*: As if we were reſolved not to *Wreſtle with Fleſh and Blood*, and to make *Chriſt's Yoke lighter* than Himſelf hath done? Many Men are upon Enquiry, *What ſtrict Duty requires of them*, How often they muſt *Pray*, How often going to *Meeting* will ſerve the turn; and if they can ſatisfy their *Conſcience*, they care not how ſeldom: How far *Chriſtian Liberty* may be *extended*, and whither they may not take this or that *Gratification conſiſtently with Religion?* How *ſunk* and *debas'd a Temper* is this! And yet 'tis too evidently our own to be deny'd.

And what are we to think of that *Goodneſs* which is like a *Morning Cloud?* The ſhocking degree of *Apoſtacy*, which is ſo viſible in many of our higheſt pretenders to Holineſs; who having been wrought upon by the *Terrors* of their *Conſciences*, and the *Amazing Diſpenſations of Providence* to *Put away the evil of their Doings*; but have ſince *turned back*, ſome to *Open & Scandalous Sins*, and a far greater number to a *Looſe unguarded* way of Living, and a *Lifeleſs Temper*; creates diſtreſſing Apprehenſions in all them that are ſincerely deſirous *God's Kingdom* may

may be advanced in our Land: Becauſe they juſtly fear that the Hearts of ſuch Profeſſors are not *ſound in God's Statutes*, and they are void of the *Divine Principles* which are the *Spirit of Godlineſs*, animating and quickning it's whole *Body*, and all it's *Parts*.

Moreover, where *Religion* is *Real* and *Vital*, and it's *Principles ſtrong and vigorous, it will ever more be upon the propagating Hand*: It will enkindle in it's Profeſſors breaſt a flaming deſire of bringing many Sons to God, and advancing his Glory in the *multitude of his Subjects*. But are our Souls generally under the influence of this *Generous Spirit*? Do we take that Pains which we might do to teach Tranſgreſſors God's ways, to ſtop our Neighbours in their wicked and fatal Courſes, and ſhew them the path of Life?

Have we laboured as we might have done, and as *Chriſtians of worſe Faith* than we, have done, in the *Converſion of the Miſerable Natives*; to turn them from Darkneſs to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God? If we had, how *Extended a Kingdom* might our Lord Jeſus by this time have had in this *vaſt Country!* If we can content our ſelves with doing ſo little for God, and the Eternal Happineſs of our Fellow Creatures; What an awak'ning a ſymptom is it of the weakneſs of thoſe Principles which we fondly boaſt of!

I ſhall only now add, That the *Powerful Love of the World, and Exorbitant Reach after Riches*, which is become the reigning Temper in Perſons of all Ranks in our Land, is alone enough to awaken our concerns for abandon'd, ſlighted and forgotten Religion. 'Tis this that takes up our Time, ſeizes our Affections, and governs our Views: Straitens our Hands reſpecting Works of Charity, and puſheth

us

us into the moſt wicked Schemes and Methods. 1 *Tim.* 6. 9, 10. This *Worldly Spirit* has in a great meaſure thruſt out Religion, and given it a *Wound* which will prove *Deadly* unleſs infinite Mercy prevent.

Theſe are ſome of the *Grey Hairs which are here and there upon us*, moſt evidently Demonſtrating the *Great Decay of Godlineſs*, and Prognoſticating it's approaching *Diſſolution*. And being willing to ſuppoſe, that we *know it*; That we are ſenſible that neither our *Hearts* nor *Works* are *perfect before God*; and that there is a neceſſity of a ſpeedy and vigorous Eſſay to be made for the putting our *Spiritual Affairs* into a better poſture. I proceed,

2. To *Apply the Advice of our Text to the People of GOD in this Land:* Urging them *to Strengthen the Things which remain that are ready to die.* And in order hereto to be WATCHFUL, i. e. *Full of Attention, Care, Courage, Zeal, and Diligence:* Every one in his proper Station to *Re-advance* and *Reſtore Religion.*

Our CIVIL RULERS are ſenſible, that the *Religion*, as well as *Outward Happineſs* of our *Land* is committed to their *Charge:* And what a Pleaſure is it that I am now to Addreſs, not *Rulers of Sodom*, but *Virtuous Godly Magiſtrates*, who are under the Influence of the *Fear* and *Glory of God*, as knowing that they *Rule By and For Him*, and are *Accountable to Him!* Who alſo being acquainted with Religion, Love it, and will be well pleaſed with an Exhortation to promote it.

And if His BRITANNICK MAJESTY Glories to be a DEFENDER OF THE FAITH; His EXCELLENCY Our GOVERNOUR alſo who is His *Vicegerent*, will Eſteem it an Honour *that the Cauſe of Religion is laid before Him.* The *Earthly Gods* never better deſerve their

Glorious

Glorious Title, than when *Virtue and Holineſs ſhine* in their *Perſonal Character*, and *Flouriſh* under their *Adminiſtration*.

SIR, Among the *Joys* which this *People* conceived at the *News* of Your EXCELLENCY's *Advancement* to the *Chair* of this *Government*; there was none greater than that which aroſe from their Expectation of the *Kind Regard* the *Religion* of your *Country* ſhould ſurely find from you. This was what *fill'd the mouth of the Godly amongſt us with Laughter, and their Tongue with Singing. They could not forbear ſaying one to another, The Lord hath done Great Things for us*: Which *Expectations* riſe higher ſtill when they read the *Intereſts of Piety* ſo often mentioned and urged in your *Proclamations* and *Publick Speeches*: Which as it gives them reaſon to believe that our Religion is near your Heart; ſo it is a foundation of Hope that Providence intends you the Honour of being Inſtrumental to its revival.

Our *Churches* have their eye upon you (under *God*) as their *Nurſing Father*; committing their *Doctrine*, *Worſhip*, *Diſcipline*, and all that is *Dear* to them to your *Patronage*. The *Houſe of Aaron* alſo hope to find in you an *Helper and Shield*. Our *Seminary of Learning*, whoſe Proſperity and that of Religion muſt needs riſe and fall together, juſtly claims the Smiles of one of its own Sons. And inaſmuch as a *Deprivation* of our *Civil Liberties* would give the deepeſt of all Wounds to *Virtue*, by op'ning a wide door to ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs; we pray that you would for Religion's ſake be an *Advocate* for *them*.

And as we hope there is a *Precious Remnant* of devout and ſincere Chriſtians in our Land, who are zealous for the *Glory of God*, and hearty Friends to the

the *Universal Prosperity* of our Zion; we beg your *Excellency's* favourable regard of them: That *Your Eye may be upon the Faithful in the Land, not only* to *Protect*, but to *Betrust and Honour* them: Whilst the *Wicked* are *scattered* by the frowns of your eyes. *Rewards* and *Advancements* have powerful *Charms* in them, and *Virtue* will probably flourish, where Men see that it is a necessary Step to the *Accomplishment of their Views.*

By thus making us *Religious*, you will also make us *Loyal and Dutiful*, whether to the *King as Supream*, or to yourself as His *Governour*: And we shall soon *Lead Quiet and Peaceable Lives, because in all Godliness and Honesty.*

Your Self shall have an honourable *Name* to all Futurity with *Jehoiada*, *Nehemiah*, and others, who have headed *Reformations* in most *Corrupt* and *Degenerate Ages*: And which is more than all, *GOD will think upon you for Good, according to all you have done for this People.*

Nextly our Honourable *Board of Senators*, whose proper Business it is to give *Counsel* in all the Weighty Affairs of the Province; Together with those *Worthy Persons* who *Represent* the *Several Towns* (and by whose Order it is that I now stand in the Desk to offer the *Divine Counsels* on this *Occasion*) will give me leave to urge, That among the many and momentous Affairs of the Province which may come before them, *Religion* may be look'd upon as the *Greatest*, and worthy of their First and *Principal Regard.*

Let *Godliness* be the *Governing Qualification* sought for in your *Elections* this Day: If a *Candidate* should in your Judgments be an *Oracle* of *Wisdom* & *Policy*, and

and yet deſtitute of this one thing, needful to *ſanctify* and *perfect* the reſt; you will not think him worthy, nor our *Precious* things ſafe in his hands. You will permit a ſenſe of *Duty* to enter all your debates, and preponderate all conſiderations; even tho' *Worldly Intereſt* and *Civil Policy* ſhould lie in the other Scale, and make contrary demands.

Your *Honours* dwelling in the ſeveral Parts of the Country, cannot be ignorant that *Drunkenneſs, Uncleanneſs, Prophanation of God's Name and Sabbath*, with other enormous Vices, which have often been mentioned on ſuch occaſions as this, are ſo far from extirpation, that they grow upon us exceedingly, and threaten the extirpation of *Religion*, and the bringing a *Scene* of *Impiety* & *Debauchery* upon the whole face of the Land, unleſs ſome more effectual methods of Redreſs be found out & apply'd, than have been hitherto.

And if this *Great and General Aſſembly* could indeed find means of ſharp'ning the edge of the *Magiſtrate's Sword*, thereby rendring him a *greater Terror to thoſe Evil Works*; and at the ſame time of *Awak'ning* him to a more *Couragious, Watchful*, and *Conſciencious Diſcharge of his Duty*; their Country would owe them a large tribute of Thanks.

From thoſe who are inveſted with a Power of *Legiſlature*, I paſs to offer a Word alſo to thoſe who have the *Execution* of our Laws committed to them. Our *Honourable Judges and Juſtices* will allow me to ſay, That the *Righteouſneſs of a Nation* is an Eſſential Branch of its Religion, *Judgment, Mercy*, & *Faith* being *the Great Things of God's Law*: And therefore they to whom the *Adminiſtration of Juſtice is committed*, muſt think their *Fidelity* and *Vigour* in diſcharging their Offices to be very needful to the flouriſhing of all *Moral Goodneſs*.

We bleſs God that we ſee our Land from time to time cleanſed from *Innocent Blood* by the Blood of the Murderer, & other abominable Wickedneſſes receiving their due Recompence: But it would compleat our Joy if many other Crimes which we think alſo deſerving to be *puniſh'd by the Judges* were more ſeverely animadverted upon; That ſo *All Iniquity may ſtop its mouth.* And would our *Courts of Judicature* pleaſe to frown upon thoſe *Litigious* Perſons, who make uneaſy Work for them, and diſturb the repoſe of their Neighbours; they would do a Work acceptable to God & Man; and Religion would eſcape the wounds which it daily receives from ſtrife & envy. *Jam.* 3.16.

The *Angels* of the *Churches* which are in *New-England*, who are alſo ſet as *Watchmen upon the Walls of Jeruſalem*, will be far from thinking themſelves unconcerned in the *Admonition* of the Text. If they have been overtaken with the *Moral Sleep* of *Inadvertency* & *Negligence*: They will now *Awake, Stand up, and Apply themſelves in Earneſt* to ſerve the Intereſt of Declining Religion: and eſpecially by their *Prayers* to God, *Giving Him no Reſt Day nor Night, until by reviving his own Work upon us in the midſt of the years, he make us a Praiſe in the Earth.* It is to be hoped that things have not yet run to ſo low an ebb with us, but that a good number, if not the greater part of our *Prieſts* are ſeen *Cloathed with Righteouſneſs*; That the good and amiable things which they preſs upon their Hearers are in ſome good meaſure to be found in their own *Perſonal Characters.* If this be one of the Good things which remain, Let us (my Fathers & Brethren in the Miniſtry) ſtrengthen it by a more univerſal Care to live our own Sermons: That we may *Adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour*, by a *Converſation*, which may convince the World that we believe what we preach, & reliſh the Duties which we perſwade others to embrace. Incredible will be

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the Influence of ſuch an *Harmony* between our *Doctrine and Life* in ſetting a new face upon Religion. In ſuch a caſe, we might reaſonably hope, that we ſhould not *Labour in vain nor ſpend our ſtrength for nought.*

And then as to our *Preaching*, Let us not labour to build up a *Shell*, to form a meer *Carcaſe of Godlineſs*, by furniſhing our Auditors with *Moral Virtues*, only, void of *Internal Vital Principles*; but *Travail in Birth* with them until *Chriſt be formed in them*, Gal. 4. 10. and they are become holy in Heart, as well as blameleſs of Life. I know not how we can begin with our Flocks better, than the *Great Prophet & Teacher* did with *Nicodemus*, *Except a Man be born again, he cannot ſee the Kingdom of God*, Joh. 3. 3.

Our Reaſoning with them muſt tend to perſwade them to be *Real and Altogether*, not *Almoſt Chriſtians*, and therefore we muſt not heal their wounded Conſciences ſlightly; but wiſely ſuffer *Convictions* to ripen into true *Converſion*: That they may paſs from *Death* to *Life* in good Earneſt, and not deceive themſelves with vain Hopes, and impoſe upon the World with their *Name* that they *Live*. To prevent which alſo the Duty of Self-Examination ought to be frequently urg'd upon them, that they may judge of their ſtate, and rectify what is amiſs.

I add no more but this, *viz.* We ought to be *Burning* as well as *Shining Lights*; That if poſſible, we may communicate our own Paſſionate regard for Chriſt's Kingdom to our Hearers. Which warmth of Addreſs muſt alſo be ſupported with the powerful Arguments which Divine Revelation furniſheth us withal, to make Men not only Religious, but ſincerely & thro'ly ſo: *e. g.* God's *Omniſciency*, the *Impoſſibility* of *Deceiving Him* with a *vain* and *empty Shew*, and the *vaniſhing Hopes* of the *Hypocrite* when *Death* & *Judgment* ſhall call them before his *Auguſt Tribunal*, if frequently

insisted upon, one would think, would be almost irresistable, in perswading Men to serve God in *Truth* and with a *perfect Heart.*

If we would thus *Prophecy*, who knows but the *Dry Bones* might be made to *live?* Sinners be turned from the *Power of Darkness*, to the *Power of Godliness*, and formal barren Professors become sincere and zealous Christians.

Our *Churches & People* also must lend us their helping Hand in carrying on this *Blessed Work.* They must say to their Pastors as *Shecaniah* to *Ezra*, Ch. 10 v. 4. *Arise, for this matter belongeth unto thee, we also will be with thee; be of good courage and do it.* They may be very helpful, by their ready & conscientious attendance on the Means and Ordinances of Religion, by speaking comfortably to their Pastors when sinking under the weight and difficulties of their Work, and strength'ning his Hands to hold the Reins of Discipline, that nothing immoral and defiling may dwell among them; and by discharging faithfully the Duty of mutual Watchfulness, *Teaching every man his Neighbour, and every man his Brother, saying, Know the Lord.* Severely rebuking also, and not suffering Sin upon one another.

And inasmuch as a *Training up of our Youth* to *Fear God* is a most likely method of perpetuating Religion; *Family Governours* are as highly concerned as any to exert themselves with their Children and Servants, to impress their tender Minds with an early Sense of their great Maker, and their Obligations to serve Him with a perfect Heart: Commanding them also as they approach to riper Years to keep the way of the Lord, and comply with all the demands of their Redeemer: Setting also instructing & inviting Examples of unaffected and undefiled Religion before their Households, and watching over their Morals,

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to Rebuke, Correct, Command, and Reward, as there ſhall be Occaſion. It is hard to conceive what a new and ſurprizing Reſurrection of Dead Religion ſuch a Conduct as this would bring on: When we ſhould ſee our whole Riſing Generation *flying to Chriſt, as a Cloud and as Doves to their Windows. Then ſhould we all know him from the leaſt to the greateſt.*

Good Men in all Stations and Capacities, by being *Examples of Piety* to their beholders, by *Sighing and Crying for all the Abominations that are committed amongſt them*, by *Reproving the Wicked*, and teſtifying their Abhorrence of his ways, by the *mutual Encouragement* which they may give one another, and by their *effectual fervent Prayers* to the *Lord of Hoſts*, That He will *Look down from Heaven, and behold, and viſit this Vine*; May alſo be Inſtruments in bringing forward this *Bleſſed Reformation*: In doing of which they will add to their own ponderous Reward, and enjoy the Glory of having done good in *Iſrael*.

My *Concluſion* ſhall be a ſuggeſtion of a few moving Thoughts to the ſeveral Orders, that have been now addreſſed.

Let us conſider, That God hath beſtowed innumerable Kindneſſes on the People of this Land: On our Anceſtors the Planters of it, and on their ſinful provoking Race to this Day: Neither *our Selves, nor our Fathers have found any Iniquity in Him*: He hath never deſerted us in our Dangers, never deny'd us in our Wants, never deceived our Expectations: And how then can we juſtify our Conduct, if we ſhould caſt him off for ever? Surely eternal Shame and Confuſion will cover our Ingratitude, if we do thus requite our own and our Father's God.

And it is none of the leaſt of God's favours to us, that whereas He might in Juſtice have drawn his

Sword

Sword upon us, by bringing on us *Deſtructive Judgments*, as a Puniſhment for our provoking Revolts; He hath rather uſed his *milder Rod*, and gently corrected us, as a Father his beloved Child; with Diſpenſations carrying more of *Terror* in them than of *Ruine* and *Calamity*. And if by ſuch Paternal Rebukes and Stripes, we be not made partakers of his Holineſs, more fatal blows muſt be looked for.

Beſides, *This is a Country that was ſettled on a Religious Foundation. A Pure and Undefiled Religion* was the Great thing our Anceſtors had in their View when they caſt their Eye towards this Wilderneſs for an Habitation. Accordingly when they arrived here they ſet up ſuch a Religion, and were at the time of their Eſpouſals, Holineſs to the Lord, a peculiar People whom God delighted in: And though we their Off-ſpring have in a great meaſure forſaken the God and Godlineſs of our Fathers; yet there is no doubt to be made but God ſtill hath a favour for us, for our Progentors ſake, and will be the more inclinable to a Reconciliation, if we ſeek after it in earneſt, *Rom.* 11. 28.

But on the contrary, it will be ſo much the more *Baſe and Diſhonourable*, if we *Degenerate from the virtue of our Stock*, Raſe a goodly Foundation, & defile a pure Land. Jer. 2. 21. *Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right ſeed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a ſtrange vine unto me?* Let us not by a total and final Declenſion deſerve ſuch an upbraiding expoſtulation as this.

But *Shame and Diſhonour will not be all: For if we who have once been ſo highly exalted to be an Holy People*, do ſuffer our ſelves to be polluted with the Abominations which other Nations are Guilty of, and repent not; who can conceive of the greatneſs of the Wrath that ſhall come upon us! God will ſay to us in the words

words of the Prophet, Amos 3. 2. *You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.*

Again, As yet there is no doubt to be made, but *we may have happy success in so noble an enterprize as the Reviving Religion.* How much more discouraging & desperate our case may be hereafter, we cannot tell. We have at present no need of saying, *Our Bones are dryed, & our Hope is lost, we shall pine away in our Iniquities.* For the things which *Remain*, though they be *ready to die*, yet if speedily improved will yield us very hopeful aid. There are as yet a great number of *Wise Men in us, to be our Pilots*; and a return to Duty will now be easier, than when hereafter an whole Generation perhaps shall be risen up *that know not the Lord.* This *Our gracious remnant* may be highly serviceable by their *Authority, Counsels, Examples*, & *Prayers*, to *stem the Tide of Corruption*, and obtain a fresh effusion of *Divine Influence* upon us.

The Law hath not perish'd from our Priests: we have their *Lips* to hearken to for *Knowlege*, & their hand to lead us in the *paths of Righteousness:* But we know not how long it shall be so, & what farther Degeneracies shall cause *the Candlestick to be removed out of it's place*; the outward Means & Ordinances of Grace to cease; And which is more than all, it is to be hop'd that we are not yet gone so far from God as to be deserted of him. He *hath not yet*, as we hope, utterly *taken away his loving kindness, nor suffered his faithfulness to fail. Seek we therefore the Lord whilst he may be found, call we upon him whilst he is near.*

Lastly, *What a Revival of Light & Hope under the present Dark & Distressing face of things, would accompany the revival of this Divine & Blessed Work!* All our fall'n *Glory* & *Happiness* would ascend again out of the Grave with it. If the *Counsel* of our *Saviour*

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in the *Text* ſhould be *acceptable* to us, and we ſhould *break off our Sins by Repentance*; *it would be a lengthning out of our* Civil *Tranquility. In Righteouſneſs we ſhould then be eſtabliſhed, & be far from Oppreſſion*: For if Piety & Virtue did once Adorn our Officers, they would be *Peace* to us. This method would ſecure our *Invaluable Priviledges, gathering Storms* ſhould ſoon be ſcattered, and *Threatning Judgments* averted: For God who hath the *Heart of Kings* (as well as other men) *in his hands*, would Command the *Royal Smiles upon us*, & *every* malicious *Tongue* that ſhould *riſe againſt us* before the Throne *ſhould be Condemned.* He would Guide all our Publick Counſels, & lead us ſafely and honourably thro' all our dark & perplexing Affairs. *Our Senators* ſhould *Decree a thing & it ſhould be Eſtabliſh'd, & the light ſhould ſhine upon our ways.*

Moreover, if our *ways* ſhould again be *made to pleaſe God*, He would ſtill cauſe our *Enemies to be at Peace with us*; Under the favour whereof, not only ſhould our New & Infant Plantations gather ſtrength, but our multiplied Off-ſpring ſhould ſtill *break forth on the right hand, and on the left, & make the deſolate places to be inhabited.*

Then ſhould our *Traffick upon the Sea*, & *Handy Work* in both *City* & *Field* take a remarkable turn for the better; and there ſhould be no *Complaining in our Streets*, for want of *Bread to Eat*, or of a *Medium* wherewith to procure it. *If we ſhould return to the Almighty* —— *we ſhould lay up Gold as Duſt, & we ſhould have plenty of Silver*, Job 23. 24, 25. We ſhould be fed with the fineſt of the Wheat, & Honey from the Rock. *Pſal.* 81. 16. Which Felicities alſo ſhould not terminate in our ſelves, but be tranſmitted to future Generations of our Off-ſpring, who riſing up in our ſtead ſhould call us Bleſſed, who have laid ſo happy a Foundation of their Weal.

But the Mercy of the Lord is from everlaſting to everlaſting, upon them that fear him, and his Righteouſneſs unto Childrens Children: To ſuch as keep his Covenant, and to thoſe that remember his Commandments to do them, Pſal. 103. 17, 18.

FINIS.